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WHETHER military service was lawful for a Christian at all was at the time of the Reformation one of the most keenly debated questions; and, considering the force of opinion arrayed on the negative side, its ultimate decision in the affirmative is a matter of more wonder than is generally given to it. Sir Thomas More charges Luther and his disciples with carrying the doctrines of peace to the extreme limits of non-resistance; and the views on this subject of the Mennonites and Quakers were but what at one time seemed not unlikely to have been those of the Reformed Church generally.

By far the foremost champion on the negative side was Erasmus, who, being at Rome at the time when the League of Cambray, under the auspices of Julius II., was meditating war against the Republic of Venice, wrote a book to the Pope, entitled *Antipolemus*, which, though never completed, probably exists in part in his tract known under the title of *Dulce bellum inexpertis*, and printed among his *Adagia*. In it he complained, as one might complain now, that the custom of war was so recognised an incident of life that men wondered there should be any to whom it was displeasing; and likewise so approved of generally, that to find any fault

with it savoured not only of impiety, but of heresy. To speak of it, therefore, as he did in the following passage, required some courage: "If there be anything in the affairs of mortals which it is the interest of men not only to attack, but which ought by every possible means to be avoided, condemned, and abolished, it is of all things War, than which nothing is more impious, more calamitous, more widely pernicious, more inveterate, more base, or in sum more unworthy of man, not to say of a Christian." In a letter to Francis I. on the same subject, he noticed as an astonishing fact that out of such a multitude of abbots, bishops, archbishops, and cardinals as existed in the world, not one of them should step forward to do what he could, even at the risk of his life, to put an end to so deplorable a practice.

The failure of this view of the custom of war, which is in its essence more opposed to Christianity than the custom of selling men for slaves or sacrificing them to idols, to take any root in men's minds, is a misfortune on which the whole history of Europe since Erasmus forms a sufficient commentary. That failure is partly due to the unlucky accident which led Grotius in this matter to throw all his weight into the opposite scale. For this famous jurist, entering at much length into the question of the compatibility of war with the profession of Christianity (thereby proving the importance which in his day still attached to it), came to conclusions in favour of the received opinion, which are curiously characteristic both of the writer and his time. His general argument was, that if a sovereign was justified in putting his own subjects to death for crimes, much more was he justified in using the sword against people who were not his subjects, but strangers to him. And this absurd argument was enforced by such feeble considerations as the following: that laws of war were laid down in the book of Deuteronomy; that John the Baptist did not bid the soldiers who consu

him to forsake their calling, but to abstain from extortion and be content with their wages; that Cornelius the centurion, whom St. Peter baptised, neither gave up his military life, nor was exhorted by the apostle to do so; that the Emperor Constantine had many Christians in his armies, and the name of Christ inscribed upon his banners; and that the military oath after his time was taken in the name of the Three Persons of the Trinity.

One single reflection will suffice to display the utter shallowness of this reasoning, which was after all only borrowed from St. Augustine. For if Biblical texts are a justification of war, they are clearly a justification of slavery; whilst, on the other hand, the general spirit of the Christian religion, to say nothing of several positive passages, is at least equally opposed to one custom as to the other. If then the abolition of slavery is one of the services for which Christianity as an influence in history claims a large share of the credit, its failure to abolish the other custom must in fairness be set against it; for it were easier to defend slave-holding from the language of the New Testament than to defend military service, far more being said there to inculcate the duty of peace than to inculcate the principles of social equality: and the same is true of the writings of the Fathers.

The different attitude of the Church towards these two customs in modern times, her vehement condemnation of the one, and her tolerance or encouragement of the other, appears all the more surprising when we remember that in the early centuries of our era her attitude was exactly the reverse, and that, whilst slavery was permitted, the unlawfulness of war was denounced with no uncertain or wavering voice.

When Tertullian wrote his treatise *De Corona* (201) concerning the right of Christian soldiers to wear laurel crowns, he used words on this subject which, even if at variance with some of his statements made in his Apology thirty years

earlier, may be taken to express his maturer judgment. "Shall the son of peace" (that is, a Christian), he asks, "act in battle when it will not befit him even to go to law? Shall he administer bonds and imprisonments and tortures and punishments who may not avenge even his own injuries? . . . The very transference of his enrolment from the army of light to that of darkness is sin." And again, "What if the soldiers did go to John and receive the rule of their service, and what if the Centurion did believe; the Lord by His disarming of Peter disarmed every soldier from that time forward." Tertullian made an exception in favour of soldiers whose conversion was subsequent to their enrolment (as was applied in discussing their duty with regard to the laurel-wreath), though insisting even in their case that they ought either to leave the service, as many did, or to refuse participation in its acts, which were inconsistent with their Christian profession. So that at that time Christian opinion was clearly not only averse to a military life being entered upon after baptism (of which there are no instances on record), but in favour of its being forsaken, if the enrolment preceded the baptism. The Christians who served in the armies of Rome were not men who were converts or Christians at the time of enrolling, but men who remained with the colours after their conversion. If it is certain that some Christians *remained* in the army, it appears equally certain that no Christian at that time thought of *entering* it.

This seems the best solution of the much-debated question, to what extent Christians served at all in the early centuries. Irenæus speaks of the Christians in the second century as not knowing how to fight, and Justin Martyr, his contemporary, considered Isaiah's prophecy about the swords being turned into ploughshares as in part fulfilled, because his co-religionists, who in times past had killed one another, did not then know how to fight even with their enemies. The

charge made by Celsus against the Christians, that they refused to bear arms even in case of necessity, was admitted by Origen, but justified on the ground of the unlawfulness of war. "We indeed fight in a special way," he says, "on the king's behalf; but we do not go on campaigns with him, even should he press us to do so. We do battle on his behalf as a peculiar army of piety, prevailing by our prayers to God for him." And again: "We no longer take up the sword against people, nor learn to make war any more, having become, through Jesus, sons of peace." Nothing could be clearer nor more conclusive than this language, and the same attitude towards war was expressed or implied by the following fathers, in chronological order: — Justin Martyr, Tatian, Clemens of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius, Archelaus, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Cyril. Eusebius says that many Christians in the third century laid aside the military life rather than abjure their religion. Of 10,050 pagan inscriptions that have been collected, 545 were found to belong to pagan soldiers, while of 4,734 Christian inscriptions of the same period, only twenty-seven were those of soldiers; from which it seems rather absurd to infer, as a French writer has inferred, not that there was a great disproportion of Christian to pagan soldiers in the imperial armies, but that most Christian soldiers being soldiers of Christ did not like to have it recorded on their epitaphs that they had been in the service of any *man*.*

On the other hand, there were certainly always some Christians who remained in the ranks after their conversion, in spite of the military oath in the names of the pagan deities and the quasi-worship of the standards which constituted some part of the early Christian antipathy to war. This is implied in the remarks of Tertullian, and stands in no need of the

* Le Blant, *Inscriptions Chretiennes*, i. 86.

support of such legends as the Thundering Legion of Christians, whose prayers obtained rain, or of the Theban legion of 6,000 Christians martyred under Maximian. It was left as a matter of individual conscience. In the story of the martyr Maximilian, when Dion the proconsul reminded him that there were Christian soldiers among the life-guards of the Emperors, the former replied, "They know what is best for them to do; but I am a Christian and cannot fight." Marcellus, the converted centurion, threw down his belt at the head of his legion, and suffered death rather than continue in the service; and the annals of the early Church abound in similar martyrdoms. Nor can there be much doubt but that a love of peace and dislike of bloodshed were the principal causes of this early Christian attitude towards the military profession, and that the idolatry and other pagan rites connected with it only acted as minor and secondary deterrents. Thus, in the Greek Church, St. Basil would have excluded from communion for three years anyone who had shed an enemy's blood; and a similar feeling explains Theodosius' refusal to partake of the eucharist after his great victory over Eugenius. The canons of the Church excluded from ordination all who had served in an army after baptism; and in the fifth century Innocent I. blamed the Spanish churches for their laxity in admitting such persons into holy orders.*

The anti-military tendency of opinion in the early period of Christianity appears therefore indisputable, and Tertullian would probably have smiled at the prophet who should have predicted that Christians would have ceased to keep slaves long before they should have ceased to commit murder and robbery under the fiction of hostilities. But it proves the strength of the original impetus, that Ulphilas, the first apostle to the Goths, should purposely, in his translation of

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* Bingham, *Christian Antiquities*, i. 486.

the Scriptures, have omitted the Books of Kings, as too stimulative of a love of war.

How utterly in this matter Christianity came to forsake its earlier ideal is known to all. This resulted partly from the frequent use of the sword for the purpose of conversion, and partly from the rise of the Mahometan power, which made wars with the infidel appear in the light of acts of faith, and changed the whole of Christendom into a kind of vast standing military order. But it resulted still more from that compromise, effected in the fourth century, between paganism and the new religion, in which the former retained more than it lost, and the latter gave less than it received. Considering that the Druid priests of ancient Gaul or Britain, like the priests of pagan Rome, were exempt from military service,* and often, according to Strabo, had such influence as to part combatants on the point of an engagement, nothing is more remarkable than the extent to which the Christian clergy, bishops, and abbots, came to lead armies and fight in battle, in spite of canons and councils of the Church, at a time when that Church's power was greater, and its influence wider, than it has ever been since. Historians have scarcely given due prominence to this fact, which covers a period of at least a thousand years; for Gregory of Tours mentions two bishops of the sixth century who had killed many enemies with their own hands; whilst Erasmus in the sixteenth, complains of bishops taking more pride in leading three or four hundred dragoons, with swords and guns, than in a following of deacons and divinity students; and asks, with just sarcasm, why the trumpet and fife should sound sweeter in their ears than the singing of psalms or the words of the Bible.

In the fourteenth century, when war and chivalry were at

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* Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, vi. 14. "Druides a bello abesse consuerunt. . . . militiæ vacationem habent."—*Cf.* Origen in Celsum, viii. 73.

their height, occurs a remarkable protest against this state of things from Wycliffe, who, in this, as in other respects, anticipated the Reformation :—"Friars now say that bishops can fight best of all men, and that it falleth most properly to them, since they are lords of all this world. They say Christ bade His disciples sell their coats, and buy them swords; but whereto, if not to fight? Thus friars make a great array, and stir up many men to fight. But Christ taught not His apostles to fight with a sword of iron, but with the sword of God's word, and which standeth in meekness of heart and in the prudence of man's tongue. . . . . If man-slaying in others be odious to God, much more in priests, who should be vicars of Christ." And Wycliffe proceeds not only to protest against this, but to advocate the general cause of peace on earth on grounds which he is aware men of the world will scorn and reject as fatal to the existence of kingdoms.*

The custom of the clergy to fight was no occasional, but an inveterate practice, and, apparently, common in the world long before the system of feudalism gave it some justification by the connection of military service with the enjoyment of lands. Yet it has now so completely disappeared that—as a a proof of the possible change of thought which may ultimately render a Christian soldier as great an anomaly as a fighting bishop—it is worth recalling from history some instances of so curious a custom. "The bishops themselves —not all, but many—" says a writer of King Stephen's reign, "bound in iron and completely furnished with arms, were accustomed to mount war-horses with the perverters of their country, to share in their spoil; to bind and torture the knights whom they took in the chance of war, or whom they met full of money."† It was at the battle of Bouvines

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* Vaughan's *Life of Wycliffe*, vol. ii., p. 212-13.

† Turner's *England*, iv. 458, from Duchesne, *Gesta Stephani.*

(1214) that the famous Bishop of Beauvais fought with a club instead of a sword, out of respect for the rule of the canon which forbade an ecclesiastic to shed blood. Matthew Paris tells the story how Richard I. took the said bishop prisoner, and, when the Pope begged for his release as being his own son and a son of the Church, sent to Innocent III. the episcopal coat of mail with the inquiry whether he recognised it as that of his son or of a son of the Church; to which the Pope had the wit to reply that he could not recognise it as belonging to either.* The story also bears repeating of the impatient knight who, sharing the command of a division at the battle of Falkirk with the Bishop of Durham, cried out to his slower colleague, before closing with the Scots, "It is not for you to teach us war; to your Mass, Bishop," and therewith rushed with his followers into the fray (1298).†

It is, perhaps, needless to multiply instances which, if Du Cange may be credited, became more common during the devastation of France by the Danes in the ninth century, when all the military aid that was available became a matter of national existence. That event rendered Charlemagne's capitulary a dead letter, by which that monarch had forbidden any ecclesiastic to march against an enemy, save two or three bishops, to bless the army, or reconcile the combatants, and a few priests to give absolution and celebrate the Mass.‡ It appears that that law was made in response to an exhortation by Pope Adrian II., similar to one addressed

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* "Non filius meus est vel ecclesiæ; ad regis autem voluntatem redimetur, quia potius Martis quam Christi miles judicatur."

† Turner's *England*, v. 92.

‡ "Sanxit ut nullus in posterum sacerdos in hostem pergeret, nisi duo vel tres episcopi electione cæterorum propter benedictionem populique reconciliationem, et cum illis electi sacerdotes qui bene scirent populis pœnitentias dare, missas celebrare, etc." (in Du Cange, "Hostis").

in the previous century by Pope Zachary to Charlemagne's ancestor, King Pepin. But though military service and the tenure of ecclesiastical benefices became more common from the time of the Danish irruptions, instances are recorded of abbots and archbishops who chose rather to surrender their temporalities than to take part in active service; and for many centuries the whole question seems to have rested on a most uncertain footing, law and custom demanding as a duty that which public and ecclesiastical opinion condoned, but which the Church herself condemned.

It is a signal mark of the degree to which religion became enveloped in the military spirit of those miserable days of chivalry, that ecclesiastical preferment was sometimes the reward of bravery on the field, as in the case of that chaplain to the Earl of Douglas who, for his courage displayed at the battle of Otterbourne, was, Froissart tells us, promoted the same year to a canonry and archdeaconry at Aberdeen.

Vasari, in his Life of Michael Angelo, has a good story which is not only highly typical of this martial Christianity, but may be also taken to mark the furthest point of divergence reached by the Church in this respect from the standpoint of her earlier teaching. Pope Julius II. went one day to see a statue of himself which Michael Angelo was executing. The right hand of the statue was raised in a dignified attitude, and the artist consulted the Pope as to whether he should place a book in the left. "Put a sword into it," quoth Julius, "for of letters I know but little." This was the Pope of whom Bayle says that never man had a more warlike soul, and of whom, with some doubt, he repeats the anecdote of his having thrown into the Tiber the keys of St. Peter, with the declaration that he would thenceforth use the sword of St. Paul. However this may be, he went in person to hasten the siege of Mirandola, in opposition to the protests of the cardinals and to the scandal of Christendom (1510).

There it was that, to encourage the soldiers, he promised them, that if they exerted themselves valiantly, he would make no terms with the town, but would suffer them to sack it;* and though this did not occur, and the town ultimately surrendered on terms, the head of the Christian Church had himself conveyed into it by the breach.

The scandal of this proceeding contributed its share to the discontent which produced the Reformation; and that movement continued still further the disfavour with which many already viewed the connection of the clergy with actual warfare. It has, however, happened occasionally since that epoch that priests of martial tastes have been enabled to gratify them, the custom having become more and more rare as public opinion grew stronger against it. The last recorded instance of a fighting divine was the Bishop of Derry, who having been raised to that see by William III. in gratitude for the distinguished bravery with which, though a clergyman, he had conducted the defence of Londonderry against the forces of James II., and for which he was rewarded with the title of Doctor of Divinity by the University of Oxford, was shot dead at the battle of the Boyne. He had, says Macaulay, "during the siege, in which he had so highly distinguished himself, contracted a passion for war," but his zeal to gratify it on that second occasion cost him the favour of the king. It is, however, somewhat remarkable that history should have called no special attention to the last instance of a bishop who fought and died upon a battlefield, nor have sufficiently emphasized the great revolution of thought which first changed a common occurrence into something unusual, and finally into a memory that seems ridiculous. No his-

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* Guicciardini. "Prometteva che se i soldati procedevano virilmente che non accetterebbe la Mirandola con alcuno patto; ma lascierebbe in potestà loro il saccheggiarla."

torical fact affords a greater justification than this for the hope that, absurd as is the idea of a fighting bishop to our own age, that of a fighting Christian may be to our posterity.

As bishops were in the middle ages warriors, so they were also the common bearers of declarations of war. The Bishop of Lincoln bore, for instance, the challenge of Edward III. and his allies to Charles V. at Paris; and greatly offended was the English king and his council when Charles returned the challenge by a common valet—they declared it indecent for a war between two such great lords to be declared by a mere servant, and not by a prelate, or knight of valour.

The declaration of war in those times appears to have meant simply a challenge or defiance, like that then and afterwards customary in a duel. It appears to have originated out of habits that governed the relations between the feudal barons. We learn from Froissart that when Edward was made vicar of the German Empire an old statute was renewed which had before been made at the Emperor's court, to the effect that no one intending to injure his neighbour might do so without sending him a defiance three days beforehand. The following extract from the challenge of war sent by the Duke of Orleans, the brother of the king of France, to Henry IV. of England, testifies to the close resemblance between a declaration of war and a challenge to a deed of arms, and to the levity which often gave rise to either: "I, Louis, write and make known to you, that with the aid of God and the blessed Trinity, in the desire which I have to gain renown, and which you likewise should feel, considering idleness as the bane of lords of high birth who do not employ themselves in arms, and thinking I can no way better seek renown than by proposing to you to meet me at an appointed place, each of us accompanied with 100 knights and esquires, of name and arms without reproach, there to combat till one of

the parties shall surrender; and he to whom God shall grant the victory, shall do with his prisoners as he pleases. We will not employ any incantations that are forbidden by the Church, but make use of the bodily strength given us by God, with armour as may be most agreeable to every one for the security of his person, and with the usual arms, that is lance, battle-axe, sword, and dagger, . . . without aiding himself by any bodkins, hooks, bearded darts, poisoned needles or razors, as may be done by persons unless they are positively ordered to the contrary. . . ." * Henry IV. answered the challenge with some contempt, but expressed his readiness to meet the duke in single combat, whenever he should visit his possessions in France, to prevent any greater effusion of Christian blood, since a good shepherd, he said, should expose his own life for his flock. It even seemed at one time as if wars might have resolved themselves into this more rational mode of settlement. The Emperor Henry IV. challenged the Duke of Swabia to single combat. Philip Auguste of France is said to have proposed to Richard I. to settle their differences by a combat of five on each side; and when Edward III. challenged the realm of France, he offered to settle the question by a duel or a combat of 100 men on each side, with which the French king would, it appears, have complied, had Edward consented to stake the kingdom of England against that of France.

In the custom of naming the implements of war after the most revered names of the Christian hagiology may be observed another trace of the close alliance that resulted between the military and spiritual sides of human life, somewhat like that which prevailed in the sort of worship paid to their lances, pikes, and battle-axes by the ancient Scandinavians. †

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* Monstrelet, i. 9.

† Crichton's *Scandinavia*, i. 170.

Thus the two first forts which the Spaniards built in the Ladrone Islands they called, for instance, respectively after St. Francis Xavier and the Virgin Mary. Twelve ships in the Armada were called after the Twelve Apostles, just as Henry VIII. called twelve of his cannons, one of which, St. John by name, was captured by the French in 1513.* It is probable that mere irreverence had less to do with such a custom than the hope thereby of obtaining favour in war, such as may also be traced in the religious ceremony of consecrating military banners, which has descended to our own times. †

To the same order of superstition belongs the old custom of falling down and kissing the earth before starting on a charge or assault of battle. The practice is alluded to several times in Montluc's Commentaries, but so little was it understood by a modern French editor that in one place he suggests the reading *baissèrent la tête* (they lowered their heads) for *baisèrent la terre* (they kissed the earth). But the latter reading is confirmed by passages elsewhere; as, for instance, in the "Memoirs of Fleurange," where it is stated that Gaston de Foix and his soldiers kissed the earth, according to custom, before proceeding to march against the enemy; ‡ and, again, in the Life of Bayard, by his secretary, who records it among the virtues of that knight that he would rise from his bed every night to prostrate himself at full length on the floor and kiss the earth. § This kissing of the earth was an abbreviated form of taking a particle of it in the mouth, as both Elmham and Livius mention to have been done by the English at Agincourt before attacking the French; and this again must have been an abbreviated form of receiving the sacrament; for Villani says of the Flemish at Cambray (1302) that

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* *Mémoires du Fleurange.* Petitot, xvi. 253.

† See Palmer, *Origines Liturgicæ*, ii. 362-95.

‡ Petitot, xvi. 229. § *Ibid.* 135.

they made a priest go all over the field with the sacred elements, and that instead of communicating, each man took a little earth and put it into his mouth.* This seems a more likely explanation than that the custom was intended as a reminder to the soldier of his mortality, as if in a trade like his there could be any lack of testimony of that sort.

It is curious to observe how war in every stage of civilisation has been the central interest of public religious supplication; and how, from the pagans of old to modern savages, the pettiest quarrels and conflicts have been deemed a matter of interest to the immortals. The Sandwich Islanders and Tahitians sought the aid of their gods in war by human sacrifices. The Fijians before war were wont to present their gods with costly offerings and temples, and offer with their prayers the best they could of land crabs, or whales' teeth; being so convinced that they thereby ensured to themselves the victory, that once, when a missionary called the attention of a war party to the scantiness of their numbers, they only replied with disdainful confidence, "Our allies are the gods." The prayer which the Roman pontifex addressed to Jupiter on behalf of the Republic at the opening of the war with Antiochus, king of Syria, is extremely curious: "If the war which the people has ordered to be waged with King Antiochus shall be finished after the wish of the Roman senate and people, then to thee, oh Jupiter, will the Roman people exhibit the great games for ten successive days, and offerings shall be presented at all the shrines, of such value as the senate shall decree."† This rude state of theology, wherein a victory from the gods may be obtained for a fair consideration in

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* *Ibid.*, viii. 55. "Feciono venire per tutto il campo un prete parato col corpo di Christo, e in luogo di communicarsi ciascuno prese uno poco di terra, e la si mise in boca."

† Livy, xxxvi. 2.

exchange, tends to keep alive, if it did not originate, that sense of dependence on invisible powers which constitutes the most rudimentary form of religion; for it is a remarkable fact that the faintest notions of supernatural agencies are found precisely among tribes whose military organisation or love for war is the lowest and least developed. In proportion as the war spirit is cultivated does the worship of war-presiding deities prevail; and since these are formed from the memories of warriors who have died or been slain, their attributes and wishes remain those of the former earthly potentate, who, though no longer visible, may still be gratified by presents of fruit, or by slaughtered oxen or slaves.

The Khonds, of Orissa, in India, afford an instance of this close and pernicious association between religious and military ideas, which may be traced through the history of many far more advanced communities. For though they regard the joy of the peace dance as the very highest attainable upon earth, they attribute, not to their own will, but to that of their war god, Loha Pennu, the source of all their wars. The devastation of a fever or tiger is accepted as a hint from that divinity that his service has been too long neglected, and they acquit themselves of all blame for a war begun for no better reason, by the following philosophy of its origin: "Loha Pennu said to himself, Let there be war, and he forthwith entered into all weapons, so that from instruments of peace they became weapons of war; he gave edge to the axe and point to the arrow; he entered into all kinds of food and drink, so that men in eating and drinking were filled with rage, and women became instruments of discord instead of soothers of anger." And they address this prayer to Loha Pennu for aid against their enemies: "Let our axes crush cloth and bones as the jaws of the hyæna crush its prey. Make the wounds we give to gape. . . . When the wounds of our enemies heal, let lameness remain. Let their stones

and arrows fall on us as the flowers of the mowa-tree fall in the wind. . . . Make their weapons brittle as the long pods of the karta-tree."

In their belief that wars were of external causation to themselves, and in their endeavour to win by prayer a favourable issue to their appeal to arms, it could scarcely be maintained that the nations of Christendom have at all times shown any marked superiority over the modern Khonds. But in spite of this, and of the fierce military character that Christianity ultimately assumed, the Church always kept alive some of her earlier traditions about peace, and even in the darkest ages set some barriers to the common fury of the soldier. When the Roman Empire was overthrown, her influence in this direction was in marked contrast with what it has been ever since. Even Alaric when he sacked Rome (410) was so far affected by Christianity as to spare the Churches and the Christians who fled to them. Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome, inspired even Attila with respect for his priestly authority, and averted his career of conquest from Rome; and the same Bishop, three years later (455), pleaded with the victorious Genseric that his Vandals should spare the unresisting multitude and the buildings of Rome, nor allow torture to be inflicted on their prisoners. At the instance of Gregory II., Luitprand, the Lombard King, withdrew his troops from the same city, resigned his conquests and offered his sword and dagger on the tomb of St. Peter (730).

Yet more praiseworthy and perhaps more effective were the efforts of the Church from the tenth century onwards to check that system of private war which was then the bane of Europe, as the system of public and international wars has been since. In the south of France several bishops met and agreed to exclude from the privileges of a Christian in life and after death all who violated their ordinances directed

against that custom (990). Only four years later the Council of Limoges exhorted men to swear by the bodies of the saints that they would cease to violate the public peace. Lent appears to have been to some extent a season of abstinence from fighting as from other pleasures, for one of the charges against Louis le Débonnaire was that he summoned an expedition for that time of the year.

In 1032 a bishop of Aquitaine declared himself the recipient of a message from heaven, ordering men to cease from fighting; and not only did a peace, called the Truce of God, result for seven years, but it was resolved that such peace should always prevail during the great festivals of the Church, and from every Thursday evening to Monday morning. And the regulation for one kingdom was speedily extended over Christendom, confirmed by several Popes, and enforced by excommunication.* If such efforts were not altogether successful, and the wars of the barons continued till the royal power in every country was strong enough to suppress them, it must none the less be recognised that the Church fought, if she fought in vain, against the barbarism of a military society, and with an ardour that is in striking contrast with her apathy in more recent history.

It must also be granted that the idea of what the Papacy might do for the peace of the world, as the supreme arbiter of disputes and mediator between contending powers, gained possession of men's minds, and entered into the definite policy of the Church about the twelfth century, in a manner that might suggest reflection for the nineteenth. The name of Gerohus de Reigersperg is connected with a plan for the pacification of the world, by which the Pope was to forbid war to all Christian princes, to settle all disputes between them, and

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* Robertson, *Charles V.*, note 21. Ryan, *History of Effects of Religion on Mankind*, 124.

to enforce his decisions by the greatest powers that have ever yet been devised for human authority—namely by excommunication and deposition. And the Popes attempted something of this sort. When, for instance, Innocent III. bade the King of France to make peace with Richard I., and was informed that the dispute concerned a matter of feudal relationship with which the Pope had no right of interference, the latter replied that he interfered by right of his power to censure what he thought sin, and quite irrespective of feudal rights. He also refused to consider the destruction of places and the slaughter of Christians as a matter of no concern to him ; and Honorius III. forbade an attack upon Denmark, on the ground that that kingdom lay under the special protection of the Papacy.*

The clergy, moreover, were even in the most warlike times of history the chief agents in negotiations for peace, and in the attempt to set limits to military reprisals. When, for instance, the French and English were about to engage at Poitiers, the Cardinal of Perigord spent the whole of the Sunday that preceded the day of battle in laudable but ineffectual attempts to bring the two sides to an agreement without a battle. And when the Duke of Anjou was about to put 600 of the defenders of Montpelier to death by the sword, by the halter, and by fire, it was the Cardinal of Albany and a Dominican monk who saved him from the infamy of such a deed by reminding him of the duty of Christian forgiveness.

In these respects it must be plain to every one that the attitude and power of the Church has entirely changed. Whether Catholic or Protestant, she has stood apart more and more as time has gone on from her great opportunities as a promoter of peace. Her influence, it is notorious, no longer counts for anything, where it was once so powerful, in the

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* M. J. Schmidt, *Histoire des Allemands traduite*, iv. 232-3.

field of negotiation and reconcilement. She lifts no voice to denounce the evils of war, nor to plead for greater restraint in the exercise of reprisals and the abuse of victory. She lends no aid to teach the duty of forbearance and friendship between nations, to diminish their idle jealousies, nor to explain the real identity of their interests. It may even be said, without risk of contradiction, that whatever attempt has been made to further the cause of peace upon earth, or to diminish the horror of the customs of war, has come, not from the Church, but from the school of thought to which she has been most opposed, and which she has studied most persistently to revile.

In respect, too, of the justice of the cause of war, the Church within recent centuries has entirely vacated her position. What does she now care or say about the justice of war? Yet once she insisted on it as the only condition that justified individuals in fighting. It is noticeable that in the 37th article of the English Church, which is to the effect that a Christian at the command of the magistrate may wear weapons and serve in the wars, the word *justa*, which in the Latin form preceded the word *bella*, or wars, has been omitted.* But if the leaders of the Reformation decided on the whole in favour of the lawfulness of military service for a Christian it was with the distinct reservation that the cause of war should be just. Bullinger, who was Zwingli's successor in the Reformed Church at Zurich, decided that though a Christian might take up arms at the command of the magistrate, it would be his duty to disobey the magistrate if he purposed to make war on the guiltless; and that only the death of those soldiers on the battlefield was glorious who fought for

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* "Christianis licet ex mandato magistratus arma portare et *justa* bella administrare."

their religion or their country. Thomas Becon, chaplain to Archbishop Cranmer, complained of the utter disregard of a just and patriotic motive for war in the code of military ethics then prevalent. Speaking of the fighters of his day, he thus characterised their position in the state: "The rapacity of wolves, the violence of lions, the fierceness of tigers, is nothing in comparison of their furious and cruel tyranny; and yet do many of them this not for the safeguard of their country (for so it would be the more tolerable), but to satisfy their butcherlike affects, to boast another day of how many men they have been the death, and to bring home the more preys that they may live the fatter ever after for these spoils and stolen goods." * From military service, he maintained, had all considerations of justice and humanity been entirely banished, and their stead been taken by robbery and theft, "the insatiable spoiling of other men's goods, and a whole sea of barbarous and beast-like manners." In this way the necessity of a just cause as a reason for taking part in actual warfare was reasserted at the time of the Reformation, and has only since then been allowed to drop out of sight altogether; so that now public opinion has no guide in the matter, and even less than it had in ancient Rome, the attitude of the Church towards the State on this point being rather that of Anaxarchus the philosopher to Alexander the Great, when, to console that conqueror for his murder of Clitus, he said to him: "Know you not that Jupiter is represented with Law and Justice at his side, to show that whatever is done by sovereign power is right?"

Considering, therefore, that no human institution yet devised or actually in existence has had or has a moral influence or facilities for exercising it at all equal to that

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* *Policy of War a True Defence of Peace*, 1543.

enjoyed by the Church, it is all the more to be regretted that she has never taken any real interest in the abolition of a custom which is at the root of half the crime and misery wherewith she has to contend. Whatever hopes might at one time have been reasonably entertained of the Reformed Church as an anti-military agency, the cause of peace soon sank into a sort of heresy, or, what was worse, an unfashionable tenet, associated and condemned with other signs of religious dissent. "Those who condemn the profession or art of soldiery," said Sir James Turner, "smell rank of anabaptism and quakery."* It would be difficult to find in the whole range of history any such example of wasted moral force. As Erasmus had to regret it in the sixteenth century, so had Voltaire in the eighteenth. The latter complained that he did not remember a single page against war in the whole of Bourdaloue's sermons, and he was probably right in his conjecture that the real explanation was a literal want of courage. The passage is worth quoting from the original, both for its characteristic energy of expression and for its clear insight into the real character of the custom of war:—

> Pour les autres moralistes à gages que l'on nomme prédicateurs, ils n'ont jamais seulement osé prêcher contre la guerre . . . Ils se gardent bien de décrier la guerre, qui réunit tout ce que la perfidie a de plus lâche dans les manifestes, tout ce que l'infâme friponnerie a de plus bas dans les fournitures des armées, tout ce que le brigandage a d'affreux dans le pillage, le viol, le larcin, l'homicide, la dévastation, la destruction. Au contraire, ces bons prêtres bénissent en cérémonie les étendards de meurtre ; et leurs confrères chantent pour de l'argent des chansons juives, quand la terre a été inondée de sang. †

If Voltaire's reproach is unjust, it can of course be easily refuted. The challenge is a fair one. Let him be convicted of overstating his charge by the mention of any ecclesiastic

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* *Pallas Armata*, 369, 1683.

† In his treatise *Du droit de la guerre*.

of either the Catholic or the Protestant school within the two last centuries whose name is associated with the advocacy of the mitigation or the abolition of contests of force ; or any war in the same period which the clergy of either denomination have as a body resisted either on the ground of the injustice of its origin or of the ruthless cruelty with which it has been waged. Whatever has yet been attempted in this direction, or whatever anti-military stimulus has been given to civilisation, has come distinctly from men of the world or men of letters, not from men of distinction in the Church : not from Fénelon or Paley, but from William Penn, the Abbé St. Pierre (whose connection with the Church was only nominal), from Vattel, Voltaire, and Kant. In other words, the Church has lost her old position of spiritual ascendency over the consciences of mankind, and has surrendered to other guides and teachers the influence she once exercised over the world.

Of our own Church what has been said of the Church at large is superlatively true. Against the most gigantic evils of our times the pulpit is absolutely mute, and as cold as mute. The Peace Society, which for nearly seventy years has been labouring with ever-increasing success to create a widespread aversion to war both at home and abroad, has, it is understood, derived very little assistance of any sort from the Church or Churches of England.* Whatever sanction or support it has met with from the Christian Churches, has been, not the general rule, but the rare exception ; and it would even seem from recent events that the voice of the pulpit was destined to become in the future the great tocsin of war, the loudest advocate of counsels of aggression.

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* The present writer, though not a member of the Peace Society, is glad to have this opportunity of paying his tribute of respect to the invaluable services rendered by that society to the cause of Peace.

This attitude on the part of the Church having become more and more marked and conspicuous, as wars in recent centuries have become more frequent and more fierce, it was not unnatural that some attempt should at last have been made to give some sort of justification for a fact which has undoubtedly become an increasing source of perplexity and distress to all sincere and reflective Christians. In default of a better, let us take the justification offered by Canon Mozley in his sermon on "War," preached before the University of Oxford on the 12th March, 1871; of which the following summary conveys a faithful, though of necessity an abbreviated, reflection. The main points of his apology are: That Christianity, by its original recognition of the division of the world into nations, with all their inherent rights, thereby recognised the right of war, which was plainly one of them; that the Church, never having been constituted a judge of national questions or motives, can only stand neutral between opposing sides, contemplating war as it were forensically, as a mode of international settlement that is amply justified by the want of any other; that a natural justice is inherent not only in wars of self-defence, but in wars for rectifying the political distribution of the world's races or nationalities, and in wars that aim at progress and improvement; that the spirit of self-sacrifice inseparable from war confers upon it a moral character that is in special harmony with the Christian type; that as war is simply the working out of a problem by force, there is no more hatred between the individual combatants than there is in the working out of an argument by reasoning, "the enmity is in the two wholes—the abstractions—the individuals are at peace;" that the impossibility of a substitution of an universal empire for independent nations, or of a court of arbitration, bars all hope of the attainment of an era of peace through the natural progress of society; that the absence of any head

to the nations of the world constitutes a defect or want of plan in its system, which as it has been given to it by nature cannot be remedied by other means; that it is no part of the mission of Christianity to reconstruct that system, or rather want of system, of the world, from which war flows, nor to provide another world for us to live in; but that, nevertheless, Christianity only sanctions it through the medium of natural society, and on the hypothesis of a world at discord with itself.

One may well wonder that such a tissue of irrelevant arguments could have been seriously addressed by any man to an assembly to his fellows. Feeble as seemed the biblical apology of Grotius, it was of Samsonic strength compared to this. Why should it be assumed that the existence of distinct nations, each enjoying the power, and therefore the right, to make war upon its neighbours, is incompatible with the existence of an international morality which should render the exercise of the war-right impossible, or very difficult; or that the Church, had she tried, could have contributed nothing to so desirable a result? It is begging the question altogether to contend that a state of things is impossible which has never been attempted, when the very point at issue is whether, had it been attempted, it might not by this time have come to be realised. The right of the mediæval barons and their vassals to wage private war together belonged once as much to the system, or want of system, of the world as the right of nations to attack one another in our own or an earlier period of history; yet so far was the Church, even in those days, from shrinking from contact with so barbarous a custom as something beyond her power or her mission, that she was herself the main social instrument that brought it to an end. The great efforts made by the Church to abolish the custom of private war have already been mentioned: a point which Canon Mozley, perhaps, did wisely

to ignore. Yet there is, surely, no sufficient reason why the peace of the world should be an object of less interest to the Church in these days than it was in those; or why her influence should be less as one chief element in the natural progress of society than it was when she fought to release human society from the depraving custom of the right of private war. It is impossible to contend that, had the Church inculcated the duties of the individual to other nations as well as to his own, in the way to which human reason would naturally respond, such a course would have had no effect in solving the problem of enabling separate nationalities to coexist in a state of peace as well as of independence. It is at least the reverse of self-evident that the promotion of feelings of international fraternity, the discouragement of habits of international jealousy, the exercise of acts of international friendship, the teaching of the real identity of international interests, in all of which the pulpit might have lent, or might yet lend, an invaluable aid, would have had, or would still have, any detrimental effect on the political system of distinct nationalities, or on the motives and actions of a rational patriotism. It is difficult to believe that the denunciations of a Church whose religious teaching had power to restrain the military fury of an Alaric or a Genseric would have been altogether powerless over the conduct of those German hordes whose military excesses in France, in 1870, have left so lasting a blot on their martial triumph and the character of their discipline; or that her efforts on behalf of peace, which more than a thousand years ago effectually reconciled the Angles and Mercians, the Franks and Lombards, would be wasted in helping to remove any standing causes of quarrel that may still exist between France and Germany, England and Russia, Italy and Austria.

There are, indeed, hopeful signs, in spite of Canon Mozley's apology of despair, that the priesthood of Christendom may

yet reawake to a sense of their power and opportunities for removing from the world an evil custom which lies at the root of almost every other, and is the main cause and sustenance of crime and pauperism and disease. It is possible that we have already passed the worst period of indifference in this respect, or that it may some day prove only to have been connected with the animosities of rival sects, ever ready to avail themselves of the chances that war between different nations might severally bring to their several petty interests. With the subsidence of such animosities, it were reasonable to expect the Church to assert once more as the genuine principle of her action and attitude—that no evil incident to human society is to be regarded as irremediable till every resource has been exhausted to cope with it, and every outlet of escape from it been proved a failure. Then, but not till then, is it becoming in Christian priests to utter the language of helplessness, still less that of abject despair.

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